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THE USE OF A DOCTRINAL CATECHISM IN SUNDAY-SCHOOL INSTRUCTION.

A SYMPOSIUM.

By a "catechism" is meant a statement of Christian doctrine arranged in the form of questions and answers, prepared for the purpose of being committed to memory. Whatever may have been its uses in the past, it is evident that at the present time it is practically discarded among all denominations, alike in the church, in the Sunday school, and in the home. To take one example out of many that might be given: I was present, some time ago, at a public meeting where all the Presbyterian Sunday-school pupils in the city of New York who during the year had learned and recited the Shorter Catechism were rewarded with the present of a Bagster Bible. Notwithstanding the value of the gift, the entire number was less than one hundred; and nearly all were awarded to pupils in mission schools, scarcely any to church schools; and this, while the Presbyterian church is generally and justly regarded as in the front line of fidelity to its doctrinal standards. I doubt whether among the three million members of Methodist Episcopal Sunday schools there are three thousand persons who are diligently studying the catechism. Nor is it difficult to understand the reasons for this widespread neglect of this time-honored method of instruction.

1. The catechism was devised in an age when great stress was laid upon soundness of doctrine, and when the divisions between churches followed doctrinal lines. Each church, whether Lutheran, Calvinistic, or Anglican, had its catechism, which was most explicit and positive upon the questions then at issue between the churches. In this age our churches are paying little attention to questions of abstract doctrine; controversies between theologians of different denominations are rare; we are more inclined to discuss platforms upon which we can stand together than those upon which we must stand apart;

and the catechism does not express the religious spirit of the age.

2. Then again, the catechism grew out of the ancient, rather than the modern, methods of studying the Bible. Formerly the Bible was regarded, even by scholars, as a sort of dictionary of theological proof-texts, to be used wherever they might be made to fit, regardless of historical relation or of the biblical writer's purpose: whether from Jude, or Joshua, or Job, it was all the same. The scholarship of this age does not approve the "proof-text" method: it seeks the thought of the ancient author, and not the needs of the modern theologian; it looks at the Bible from a point of view widely apart from that of the catechism-maker.

3. Moreover, the teaching of today in secular schools, as well as in Sunday schools, lays infinitely less stress upon memorizing than did the teaching of a generation ago. As a boy I was compelled to learn by number every rule of the syntax in the Latin grammar and every rule in arithmetic. Nowadays nobody learns rules in school. Principles are taught, but there is little training in memory. It is useless to expect boys and girls who commit only a few "memory verses" in the week-day school to learn by heart the ponderous statements of the catechism in the Sunday school.

4. The catechisms of the past were scarcely fitted to childhood. The Anglican and Lutheran catechisms were avowedly designed for children, but even these contain answers that test the brain-power of a mature mind. Most of the catechisms are better fitted for the senior class in the theological seminary than for the boys and girls in the Sunday school. When I was a small boy I enjoyed the luxury of attending two Sunday schools, and, as a result, of learning two catechisms. One of these was the Methodist catechism, which to my mind was long enough and difficult enough. But for what reason the other, which I learned in the Presbyterian Sunday school, should be called the "Shorter Catechism" passed my comprehension. When, however, I compared catechisms with another boy, who was wrestling with the "Heidelberg," I realized my privilege as a young

Methodist! For a class of children in the primary grade to repeat the statements of a catechism without understanding them is flatly opposed to all the pedagogical principles in vogue in the year of our Lord 1900.

5. The Methodists, in both England and America, managed to live and thrive without any official catechism for an entire century; and the Baptist churches, surpassed by none in loyalty to their denominational tenets, have never possessed a catechism, and do not hunger after one. These facts would indicate that a catechism is not an absolute necessity for a church's life.

6. Last, but not least, the Sunday school of today studies the Bible in brief, well-chosen paragraphs, the only way possible for ninety-five Sunday schools out of a hundred. Instinctively it prefers to meditate upon the words of Moses and David and Isaiah and Paul, penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, rather than to memorize abstract statements of doctrine made by subsequent generations which often change the living word into dry husks of controversy.

These are some of the reasons why the catechism has lost its influence in present-day teaching. Nevertheless, I believe that a catechism could be constructed by wise men, teachers as well as theologians, adapted to the needs of the age and to the childhood of the church, and such a catechism, though not all-important, might become very useful in the Sunday school.

JESSE L. HURLBUT,

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NEW YORK.

IN ORDER to get our bearings, let us recall to mind the following facts regarding catechisms and their use in the past. The catechetical method was devised in the earliest days of Christianity for the purpose of instructing those who were preparing to be received into the membership of the church. It was assumed that those who applied for admission to the sacrament of baptism had that general faith in Jesus Christ which entitled them to be considered Christians. But experience taught that

this faith could and did at times coexist with ideas unworthy of the true Christian. And the Christian community was embarrassed and scandalized by the consequences of such ignorance. Accordingly it undertook to instruct candidates for admission to its membership regarding the essential facts and ideas lying at its foundation. At first all catechumens were adults, and came over to Christianity either from heathendom or from Judaism. When the church began to have a large contingent of young persons born within it, the same danger of scandal and embarrassment from ignorance had to be met and was met by the same method of catechizing which had been resorted to in instructing applicants from without. All children were required to be taught the essentials of the Christian faith. To this end were used as a basis the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Later special catechisms were composed and used touching almost altogether on the essentials contained in the above-named three summaries of Christian faith and life.

The question now is: Was this course sufficiently beneficial to the church to justify its indorsement and perpetuation? It seems to us that there are reasons for answering this question in the affirmative. Every young Christian should possess a clear conception of what it means to make a profession of faith; but not all are able to construct clear notions and formulate clear statements of their thoughts on this subject. Statements, therefore, prepared carefully, which give expression to the common faith in regard to the most essential items of such faith, are designed to prove useful in guiding and stimulating thought. They have always been found beneficial. Such statements, moreover, secure a certain uniformity in expression which is necessary for the communal life of the church. They form the starting-point of more advanced thought and the basis of intercourse between those who think alike, but might be likely to express themselves very differently from one another, and open themselves to misunderstanding and confusion, were they compelled each to attempt to form his own conceptions and formulate expressions of them.

But what should such catechisms include? The ancient catechetical instruction aimed to embody two classes of elements: (1) facts regarding the birth, the life, the work, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and (2) truths regarding the nature of God, the person of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the life of faith, and the life to come. Of these two classes of elements the first (the historical) has been taken up and in a very much elaborated form is adequately cared for by the Sunday school. The second (the doctrinal) has been left, especially since the use of the International series of lessons, to the separate denominations to conduct each according to its own peculiar genius and conception of Christian truth. If it is desirable, therefore, as we think it is, that doctrinal instruction should be given by the catechetical method in the modern Sunday school, this should be done by each church as the guardian of its own children. It should cover the main essentials of Christian doctrine without going into minute details. It should be general and suggestive rather than elaborate and learned. Its main aim, therefore, should be to furnish a framework within which the young Christian may fill in his doctrinal knowledge as he finds occasion during his later intellectual development.

A. C. ZENOS,

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SURELY *something* should be done to improve the Sunday school and to enrich its teaching. I am inclined to believe that a doctrinal catechism represents a proper method and condition of improvement and of enrichment.

In favor of a doctrinal catechism two considerations may be urged: (1) A catechism presents a body of truth. The present method and condition of instruction do not so much represent error as they represent vacuity, emptiness, nothingness. A catechism offers *something*, and something truthful. (2) A catechism also presents truth in articulate form and proportion. The ordinary teacher of the ordinary Sunday school has a slight

sense of the relations of these truths which constitute truth. Truths may be so related as to make up error. A catechism gives truth through truths.

Against the use of a doctrinal catechism two considerations may also be urged: (1) A catechism is lifeless. The teacher may be content with reading its questions and simply hearing the answers to these questions. He offers no comments; he suggests no explanations; he vitalizes by no illustrations; he is a talking machine which the catechism works. (2) To the student the catechism may give the impression that Christianity is constituted by statements of truth. Truth is necessary to Christianity; but duty is as necessary, and life is more, and most fundamental.

Two conditions may be named which are to be fulfilled in order that a catechism may prove to be of real value: (1) The teacher is to regard the catechism as an aid to himself, not as a substitute for himself. (2) As a help the teacher is to breathe life into the catechism and to clothe this life with beauty.

Respecting the content of the catechism, I should desire that it be not only doctrinal, but also ethical. On its doctrinal side I would emphasize the great doctrines, and in particular the doctrine of God. The Christian church has, in my judgment, over-emphasized the insignificant doctrines and underemphasized the significant doctrines. Christian truth is a series of mountain ranges and of valleys, not a stretch of prairie. Of the truths of moral obligation, too, should a statement be made. In presenting the reasons for obeying Christ's first commandment one should not neglect the reasons for obeying the second.

Such a catechism should be made for three classes of students, each edition being more or less elaborate according to the age of students. None need be made for the primary department. The primary department is the kindergarten of the Sunday school. In it truth is conveyed in symbols other than those of the catechism.

In respect to the method of preparing a doctrinal catechism, I should suggest that the editors of the *BIBLICAL WORLD* ask representatives of several denominations to coöperate in making

a catechism. The result will have the value which it has—no more, no less. Let it be published in and through the BIBLICAL WORLD. Such a statement should be more or less general—so general, in fact, that it will lack denominational elements and characteristics. Then let the representatives of the various denominations concerned reëdit it for the use of the Sunday schools of each denomination. It would thus be made true for all and true for each.

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CLEVELAND, O.

NO FORMULAS of doctrine should be memorized which have not previously been analyzed and illustrated, so as to secure an intelligent conception of its meaning. Not that an exhaustive idea can always be attained; but at least a just and right notion, so far as the child is capable of thinking, should be sought. This implies a careful attention to grading of material.

Before any catechism of modern composition is offered the children and youth, it is essential to secure: (1) A power to tell in one's own language the main outlines of Bible history and the more important biographies, especially the life of Jesus. The outlines and stories should be carefully graded and made more full and connected with adolescence. (2) Certain classic selections of the Bible should be first analyzed, interpreted, and illustrated, and then committed to memory. This can begin in the primary department, and should never be discontinued in life. (3) At the beginning of adolescence one asks for causes, reasons, and connections, first in relation to self-improvement, and later in respect to duties to men and God. This demand should be met by interpretations of the Bible, with applications to the duties which spring out of human relations, and with frank and sympathetic treatment of the personal doubts of the pupil.

System-building should not begin before the closing years of adolescence.

The teacher, if mature, may study catechisms or other systematic statements of the creeds, for his own guidance. But

I know no catechism which seems to me suitable for any person, young or old, to commit to memory.

The act of memorizing a catechism must be secured by some motive apart from interest in the subject, and that is a serious objection, since disgust is a natural and frequent reaction against such mental processes. The appearance of knowledge can easily be secured by prizes and other appeals to emulation, but such an appearance is likely to deceive both teacher and pupil. The fixing of certain theological and technical phrases is a menace to the natural readaptations and readjustments which should go forward up to at least the twenty-fifth year of life. If the recitation of a catechism by a child implies belief of all its contents, then it becomes to some extent a training in falsehood, and so far tends to injure the conscience. Where good results have followed the use of a catechism they were due rather to the discussions, explanations, and living examples than to the memorizing of forms of creeds. Even better results in real knowledge of truth and duty, and in living interest, have been gained by suitable instruction in the Scriptures without the use of the technical, partisan, and often controversial phrases of the catechisms.

There is, of course, a so-called "catechetical" or Socratic method of lively questioning to excite reflection, to which these criticisms do not apply. Every skilful teacher uses this device in its place. But to read set questions to a class out of a book is deadly, and answers in chorus are a delusion.

C. R. HENDERSON,

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CHICAGO, ILL.

THE testimony of pastors, parents, and Sunday-school teachers is better than theories on this subject. From all these classes I have gathered, during the last few months, statements of their experience. They agree as to the vital importance of systematic religious instruction of the young by means of carefully prepared questions and answers committed to memory.

I have now before me letters from thirteen pastors in seven states who every year conduct, either in person or through other teachers, catechetical classes. In some instances these are held on Sundays, in others on week-days. Three courses are mentioned by several: the first on the Bible, the second on doctrines and duties, the third on the church. The usual method is to give four or five questions and answers for each lesson, these being the basis of free discussion by teachers and scholars. In most instances the catechisms are prepared by the pastors. But a considerable list is given of printed catechisms which are extensively used. In many cases the children have notebooks in which they write the answers from dictation. In others they find the answers in their Bibles.

One pastor says his first course aims to show what an interesting book the Bible is; the second sets forth the Christian life as beautiful and attractive; the third aims at intelligence concerning the church, devotion to it, and denominational loyalty. Another parallels the International lessons, following at present the life of Christ. Examinations are held, and graduation exercises on Children's Sunday, when diplomas are given.

Among the testimonies received are these: "Minds are clarified on religious subjects and foundations laid for good character and spiritual force." "The children of my church, more than their elders, can give a reason for the faith that is in them." "The work has resulted in clearing away many doubts and difficulties in the minds of young Christians, in making Christianity seem more reasonable to them, in giving them an added knowledge of our own church, and in the memorizing of many of the finest portions of Scripture." "No such interest has ever been seen before in the school with any lessons. I believe it is a libel on the children of our day to say that they will not bear substantial religious instruction if it is fairly given them." "The results justify us in believing that the restored catechumenate will give new power to the church over the evils that besiege our civilization." "I consider it quite as important as any work I do, and in many ways it is the most delightful part of my work." "The children are brought close to their

pastor's heart, and they all have a new sense of possession in and affection for him. Grasp of simple religious truths is firm, and expectation of religious experience in daily life is apparent."

The methods of conducting the classes are various, the catechisms are suited to different ages, but verbally exact answers are required, and by means of informal inquiry, illustrations, etc., the meaning of what has been memorized is made plain and impressed on the mind. The classes vary in number from six to sixty. In one case about one hundred and fifty have come under instruction in three seasons. The large majority have become members of the church, or are headed in that direction. Where possible, parents are made responsible for attendance. The mails are used, and notices are given from the pulpit to attract attention.

When the church is made a school for instruction, the methods are adapted to the minds of the pupils, and all are united to secure growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the reward is sure and the work of the disciples is done as the Master intended.

A. E. DUNNING,
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BOSTON, MASS.

I HAVE read with great interest the many manuals for catechetical Sunday-school instruction, and do not think a satisfactory doctrinal catechism could be made. I believe in the Socratic question-and-answer method, but to memorize the phraseology of abstract truth seems to me going back to the pedagogical methods of the trivium and quadrivium. The movement shows, among other things, how strong the reaction is against the International methods and their congeners, and with that reaction I am in heartiest sympathy. I deem it unfortunate, however, that that cry should be back to the Middle Ages instead of forward according to the principles and methods now well established in secular pedagogy.

Memory at best is a superficial acquisition for all moral and religious truth. Religious teaching is concrete and should be

definite, detailed, and objective, and dogma is the least palatable and the least useful of all kinds of intellectual pabulum. The most wooden teacher can ask questions and follow, and if necessary mark, the answers, when they are appended in cold type. But despite the lack of training for Sunday-school teachers, it seems to me a despairing confession of defeat to resurrect the very method which all educational reformers from Comenius to Froebel have condemned, and which many have spent their lives in opposing. The fact that so many have advocated this method is a sorry index of the intellectual interest which the church ought to take in the education of the young people under its care.

If a doctrinal catechism is not desirable, what is desirable in the way of doctrinal instruction? I answer with the utmost emphasis that doctrine is not for children, but for adults. The most careful study of the child's mind shows that before eighteen or twenty years of age there is no interest in anything Pauline, and that other elements of the Bible than Paul's should take precedence up to that age.

The solution of this problem is to be found in a very different direction, which I have tried to indicate in several ministerial addresses in New England, and which I now hope to print soon. Possibly I may take the liberty to refer to the helpful article by Professor George E. Dawson, of the Bible Normal College, Springfield, Mass., in the *Pedagogical Seminary* for July, 1900, entitled "Children's Interest in the Bible."

G. STANLEY HALL,
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WORCESTER, MASS.

THE Sunday school is preëminently a missionary enterprise. Pledged to advance the kingdom of God on earth by propagation, in the Christian nurture and growth of a godly seed, it seeks to lead the child, not only to love and accept the King, but to live in the kingdom as subject to its laws. Faith is to lead to service; creed is to find expression in conduct. The teaching of Christian doctrine must, therefore, be given an important place in

Sunday-school instruction. From the writer's standpoint, the problem requiring solution thus presents itself as one of method only.

The use of the catechetical method in teaching Christian doctrine is largely a thing of the distant past, notwithstanding the record of history as to its power and efficiency as a teaching process.¹ Its revival and general adoption by Sunday-school teachers, and by the clergy in their office as catechists, would work a revolution in religious teaching. The method, if it may be called such, which has largely usurped its place may be described as "hearing the catechism." By this process children are required, to a great extent, to memorize words and religious phrases, while they have little or no comprehension of what the words and phrases mean. Doctrinal instruction by this method cannot be approved when religious training is viewed in its educational aspect. Regarded as an educational process, the character of religious teaching must be determined by reference to educational principles. If there is one principle more generally accepted than any other in modern education, it is that one which prohibits committing to memory that which is not understood. First, ideas; then, words. The blind, mechanical use of a doctrinal catechism is thus prohibited. But for truly educational purposes it may still claim an important place in Sunday-school instruction.

1. For the pupil it is necessary as a form of words to which he is to attain. Christian truth deemed essential to the pupil should first be presented to him by means of oral lessons in conversational form, which convey their teaching by means of examples or illustration. The narrative of Scripture must first unfold the doctrines of Scripture. By using in this way whatever lesson material may best serve the purpose as a medium of instruction, the child may be taught step by step, "as he is able to receive the same," the fundamental truths of religion, and thus be prepared gradually to enter into the possession of a form of sound words, to which he may well be counseled to "hold fast." Without some such final summing up of truth on which

¹ See TRUMBULL, *Yale Lectures on the Sunday School*, Lecture II.

the memory may be exercised, religious instruction, no matter how good in other respects, is liable to be indefinite and incomplete and speedily forgotten. This method of procedure is in accord with another generally accepted principle which requires that the concrete presentation of truth shall precede its presentation in the form of abstract statement.

2. For the teacher, in accordance with the original intention for which the catechism was prepared, it is necessary as an outline or scheme of religious instruction from which his work may proceed. The canons of scientific education require that religious truth, in common with other truth, shall be presented in a psychological order, that is, in the order of learning. The teacher must therefore be guided by an authoritative scheme of religious instruction on the one hand, as well as by a knowledge of child nature on the other, unless the selection of religious truth deemed to be essential to the child is to be simply a matter of individual opinion. The growing favor accorded to the method which seeks to impart truth to the child for the sake of the child, that he may live and grow by it, demands as never before an important place for doctrinal instruction in the preparation of the Sunday-school teacher. "Education . . . looks to the nature of each individual for guidance in the best methods of conducting him to his inheritance, but not for knowledge of what that inheritance is."²

This suggests the advisability of having a doctrinal catechism that may serve as a standard of Christian faith and practice, and available for general use. Such a catechism, used as previously explained, would do much to give stability to the work of Christian education during the coming century. As a preliminary step looking toward concerted action in this direction, it would be advisable to ascertain the present status of doctrinal instruction as foundational work in this country, not in theory, but in actual practice, both with reference to the doctrines receiving greatest emphasis and to the method of impartation. A special committee, if such could be appointed, might undertake to

*BUTLER, "Status of Education at the Close of the Century," *Educational Review*, April, 1900.

accomplish for the study of Christian doctrine in the Sunday school what the Committee of Ten a few years ago accomplished for secondary-school studies.

"As we think, we are" is a fundamental law of man's spiritual nature. If, in recognition of this law, there is truth in the statement that "when men's notions of religion are debased, their conduct will be debased," a report, covering the ground suggested, could not fail to be both interesting and instructive as showing the character of the religious "notions" which are tending most largely to influence the secular as well as the religious life of the American people.

The study made by Professor Earl Barnes³ of the theological ideas of over one thousand children from six to twenty years of age disclosed some significant facts in this connection. Christ is seldom mentioned and his relation to the Father rarely thought out. Two children mention the Trinity. Twenty-five children speak of Christ as our Redeemer. In reasoning processes, the Bible is seldom quoted as authority. "The study proved that most of the children were ignorant of the most common and generally accepted theological conceptions of Christian people."

If the results of this study are any indication of prevailing conditions, no one will question the wisdom of securing some uniformity of action on the part of the Sunday schools of this country with reference to the teaching of the fundamental truths of the Christian religion.

MARY E. HUTCHESON,

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COLUMBUS, O.

My judgment concerning catechetical instruction in Sunday schools has not the value of an expert judgment, and yet it may be worth recording. Theoretically, it would seem that a catechism would be the best means of imparting doctrinal instruction to the young. No other way of teaching the views of a

³"Theological Life of a California Child," *Pedagogical Seminary*, December, 1893, Vol. II; also found in BARNES, *Studies in Education*.

church to its children could be more direct than this. If a clear, brief statement of doctrine could be made, satisfactory to the church that taught it and adapted to the capacity of the young, it would seem that the catechetical method met the need. The place of such teaching in the progressive course of study I should suppose to be in the latter part, not in the first years. Doctrinal instruction implies some development of mind in the learner, and little children should be taught the Christian narrative and the Christian spirit before they are made to attempt an outline of Christian doctrine.

On the practical side, however, I see difficulties in the way of such instruction, so great that I doubt whether in our time the catechetical method is likely to be employed with large success.

It is no easy task to frame a catechism that would serve the purpose. A poor, flat, ambiguous, uninspiring catechism is, of course, out of the question. The statements in a catechism must be brief, clear, positive, unmodified, without explanation and without need of explanation. The document must be so free and unapologetic in tone, so fine and strong in literary style, and so rich and spiritual in religious quality, as to win and hold its place, both with the church and with the children. At the same time it must express the real and vital convictions of the church, and convictions that are sure to be abiding, not temporary; for children ought not to be taught passing notions in the name of Christianity; nor ought they to be taught doctrine, if such there is, that the church holds only in a formal way, not vitally; nor anything that they are likely to have to unlearn.

A catechism that will fulfil these requirements cannot be made to order; it must be the offspring of an impulse to the expression of doctrine such as existed when the Westminster confession and catechism came into being. Such impulses do not come in every generation. At present there exists the deepest interest in Christian doctrine, but it takes the form of question rather than of answer. It seeks to distinguish between the eternal and the temporary, and the movement that it encourages is a movement toward a shorter and richer creed.

But I do not yet discern anywhere such an impulse toward doctrinal expression as is necessary for the production of a catechism adequate to the uses of the young. The question of what ought to go into a catechism has not been answered with sufficient unanimity, nor is the doctrine now welling up through the intellect of the church with sufficient joyousness and freedom.

Other difficulties exist, such as the inadaptation of the temper of the time to instruction conveyed in unexplained dogmatic statements, and the effect of modern methods in Bible study upon the use of proof-texts. But in view of the apparent impossibility of framing a catechism that would live at the present time, it is scarcely worth while to discuss them. I am sorry to be driven to this negative conclusion, for I think the catechetical method is ideally a good one, and I wish it might be employed with power. Better days may come.

WILLIAM N. CLARKE,

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THERE is no more urgent need today in Christian churches than a deeper seriousness and a clearer intelligence in the work of the Sunday schools. Organization of classes and departments in the schools, selection and preparation of lesson materials, methods of management and instruction, all these and much more demand early and earnest attention. It is, therefore, a source of satisfaction that the BIBLICAL WORLD is taking its present course in respect to the problems of the Sunday school. With regard to the problem here under consideration I would say:

1. There is need of a doctrinal catechism in Sunday-school instruction. Present Sunday-school methods are more favorable to the teaching of facts than of doctrines, and of these facts in isolation rather than in relation to each other and to the whole body of Christian history and truth. The "born teacher," or the lover of doctrine, can so use the International lessons as to make the members of his classes acquainted with underlying doctrines as well as patent facts; but the ordinary teacher has

not the competency for this, as the prevailing ignorance of doctrine among children and younger adults, who have been trained in the Sunday schools of the past quarter-century, abundantly shows. Until something of the nature of a doctrinal catechism is put into the hands of teacher and pupil I have no hope that much improvement will be made. In what I say here I take it for granted that the importance of a knowledge of doctrine is admitted. Yet, so far have many in our day departed from a just conception of the didactic purpose of our Lord's ministry, and so unintelligent are they as to the value and meaning of doctrinal teaching, that they are certain to raise their eyebrows at the merest suggestion of the need of a catechism.

2. A satisfactory doctrinal catechism could be prepared for general use. I use the words "satisfactory" and "general" in a modified sense. No catechism could be prepared today which would be satisfactory to all. Some would find in it too much, others too little. But there is a great body of truth on which all evangelical Christians are agreed, and this might form the basis—large, comprehensive, and, at least, reasonably satisfactory—of catechetical instruction. Some of the terms used would be, in a sense, ambiguous. These would be interpreted in one way by "progressives," and in another way by "conservatives," and as thus interpreted would be "satisfactory." But even if a catechism could not be prepared which would be satisfactory to all the churches of the evangelical order, this need not be considered an objection to the principle of catechetical instruction. The churches need not be confined to the use of any one catechism.

3. The catechism should consist of three parts. Part I should have simple, brief statements of doctrine which could be easily memorized by the youngest children. In this part the fundamentals of doctrine could be put into attractive form, care being exercised to leave for later and more advanced study those phases of doctrine which in their statement seem necessarily to approach the metaphysical. In Part II the same general idea should prevail as in Part I, the plan being to store the memory with doctrines, and to explain in part the scope and

meaning of these. Part III should show with considerable detail the scriptural basis, and furnish an outline which could be used in a thorough study, from the biblical standpoint, of the doctrines of Christianity.

4. The catechism should be used by all members of the school. Part I should be bound as a separate book for the use of the primary department of the school, Parts I and II should be bound together for the intermediate department, and the three parts for the advanced classes. The younger children would use their memory upon the catechism; those next older would use memory and understanding, though with many of them the former chiefly; the older members of the school would use their understanding more than memory. It was Jesus' method to teach great doctrines before there was the ability to comprehend them. This method should prevail in the Sunday school.

5. There should be variety in the use of the catechism, suited to local conditions. But whether the teacher spend a little time each week, or once a fortnight, or once a month, in discovering whether the catechetical lesson has been learned and in drill therein—or the superintendent do this—once in three months at least the pastor should review the school on the catechism.

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ONE MAY be profoundly impressed with the lack of well-adapted religious instruction of the young, and yet feel strongly the inadequacy, or even essential failure, of the method of the doctrinal catechism. This is, in fact, the position of the writer. I must believe that the cry for a return to doctrinal catechetical instruction is a quite mistaken reading of the true needs of our time.

In the first place, upon simple psychological grounds, the catechetical method itself seems to me wrong. Unless, for example, the whole principle—that one must do to know—which underlies the laboratory and *seminar* methods of modern

education, is at fault, the catechetical method is certainly not the best, least of all for beginners.

But even though the catechetical method were held to be the best for many fields of instruction, few, I think, with full thoughtfulness, would defend it as the best method of introduction into those fields which have to do with values. Is a catechism the best way to bring one to appreciation of literature, of music, of art, of beauty in nature, of a person? I cannot believe it. Is not the one certain method here simply to put ourselves and our pupils persistently in the presence of the best in all these spheres, and let these make their own legitimate impression?

But of all spheres of value that of religion seems to me least adapted to the catechetical method, for it has to do with life itself. The only value of a doctrinal statement is that it is an honest expression of a truth which has become real and vital for one in his own experience. Such statements of doctrine can grow only with one's growing life; they cannot be learned out of a book. In every sphere of value it is of the utmost importance that all which the pupil reaches should be wholly, honestly, his own; but most of all is this true in religion. The one imperative thing, then, for the child is to bring him into a genuine religious life of his own. Life first, and then its expression; not the expression of someone else, in order to life. The danger of the catechetical method here is real and great. It is perhaps not unimportant for us to note, too, that Christ's own method, in bringing his disciples to the confession of his Messiahship, was one of punctilious avoidance of all dogmatic statements upon the matter.

If we are Christians at all, we must know that the supreme need is that men should really see Christ; and if we believe in a real God, who has revealed himself progressively in actual history, we must come to see that our greatest task is to bring men to some fair appreciation of that historical manifestation, and let it make its own impression upon them. Christianity is a historical religion, and this is preëminently a historical age; misled by this cry for a catechism, we are in danger of turning

away from the supreme religious opportunity of our time: that of setting men face to face, as they have never yet been, with the reality of the great historical revelation of God, culminating in Christ. The greatest need of our time, and of any time, is a thoroughgoing historical study of the Bible itself, especially of the gospels. For the special instruction of the young, therefore, our work seems to me to lie in the direction already pointed out by Professor Bruce: "What is wanted is not a dogmatic catechism, or commentaries on it written in a rabbinical spirit, but a *Christian* catechism or primer, framed on a *historical* method: a little book intended to do for the young of our time what Luke did for his friend Theophilus; telling them the story of Jesus of Nazareth in a way suited to their years, and fitted to captivate their imaginations and their hearts, including the chief of his golden sayings, some representative acts and experiences, and telling briefly the story of his death and resurrection." We are to "have but one absorbing care and passion—to make the young know and love Jesus Christ."

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